

China Trade Bill Has No Teeth- July 27, 2005

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Rule for H.R. 3283, United States Trade Rights Enforcement Act

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Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong opposition to the rule before us this morning because, as was pointed out yesterday, the Republican leadership, in a clear attempt to circumvent the democratic process, tried to sneak the United States Trade Rights Enforcement Act through the House under suspension of the House rules.

Now, suspension rules are supposed to be reserved for non-controversial measures. They are most often employed for renaming post offices and honoring sports teams, but not for bills which attempt to alter America's trade policy. But this leadership wanted to force this bill through the House without a proper hearing in the committee, without the appropriate debate, and without any opportunity for amendment or improvement.

Fortunately for all Americans, that plot failed, and the measure was defeated on the floor. But to no one's surprise, they are back at it again this morning. The leadership once more has shut the door on the delivery of democracy by providing just 1 hour of debate on this measure. And more importantly, on a party-line vote, the Republicans voted to prevent any amendment by any Member of Congress from even being considered on the House floor today which would strengthen this bill.

That means they want all 435 Members of the House to accept the leadership's version of the bill; no changes, no arguments, no additions, no recommendations for improvement, just yes or no. This is like being given an opportunity to vote in an election with only one candidate on the ballot. It is a stretch to call that democracy.

The question is what is the House leadership afraid of? They do not want the membership of the body to have an opportunity to strengthen trade policies for American companies. This China trade bill is merely a public relations effort, and it is part of a last-ditch attempt to pick up votes for CAFTA which will come up later today, and nothing more.

It has no teeth, and that is exactly how the majority wants it: Long on rhetoric and short on substance. Even though it is called the United States Trade Rights Enforcement Act, the bill provides little for those concerned about the ballooning

trade deficit with the China and the destruction of U.S. jobs. It fails to include real solutions proposed by Members on both sides of the aisle.

It fails to include solutions such as strengthening remedies for American industries that were hurt by China's unfair trade practices. This is a very serious issue that the leadership is trivializing as a protection for a vote for CAFTA. But real American jobs are hanging in the balance, and a perfect example of this can be found in Buffalo, New York.

After 100 years of business, the Buffalo Color Company, the last domestic producer of indigo dye used to make blue jeans, is in the final throes, to quote the vice president, of bankruptcy. Buffalo Color is the victim, and it has already been adjudicated, of illegal Chinese dumping of indigo dye on the American market. For 2 years, we have been asking for help from the administration to stop the Chinese companies from circumventing our trade laws by shipping their cheap dye to the United States through Korea and Mexico. I have tried repeatedly to personally discuss this case with Commerce Secretary Gutierrez, and have yet to even hear back from him.

I want Members to understand that the unfair trade practices are going on because this administration will not stop them. The Secretary has been so busy going to China to give away more jobs and working up here to get CAFTA passed, he cannot even answer a letter. We have called, we have written, we have issued press releases, but we cannot get the Bush Commerce Department to lift one finger to save an iconic American industry from annihilation at the hands of Chinese price dumping, which is already illegal.

The bottom line is that, much like the Bush administration, this bill will do nothing to help Buffalo Color Company or its employees. As a result, the only remaining producer of the dye for blue jeans, a powerful American icon, will be driven into bankruptcy by illegal price dumping, and more American jobs will be lost. Let me repeat that they have already won their case against China. The Commerce Department simply refuses to allow it to survive.

I hope the sad irony of this is not going to be lost on anybody here today, because Buffalo Color should be able to count on its Federal Government to provide protection from unfair trade practices. With this bill, the Republican leadership is failing to meet that responsibility.